

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5352

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 30248

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FR, US

SUBJECT: US-FRENCH PLANNING TALKS

REF: (A) PARIS 29853; (B) PARIS 29473; (C) PARIS 29641

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT DEPARTMENT CONSIDER TWO ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS FOR DISCUSSION IN FEBRUARY 1976 TALKS BETWEEN S/P AND CAP STAFFS: MEDITERRANEAN EVOLUTION AND INDIAN OCEAN SECURITY. END SUMMARY.

2. DE MONTBRIAL HAS INFORMED US THAT FEBRUARY 2-4 WOULD BE CONVENIENT PERIOD FOR US-FRENCH PLANNING TALKS.

3. DE MONTBRIAL SAID THAT HE IS STILL REFLECTING ON AGENDA ITEMS AND WILL BE IN CONTACT AT A LATER TIME ON THIS. IN THE MEANTIME, IT OCCURS TO US THAT THERE ARE TWO SPECIFIC SUBJECTS THAT COULD BE PROFITABLY EXPLORED IN S/P-CAP TALKS. IN ORDER OF PRIORITY THEY ARE:

A. MEDITERRANEAN EVOLUTION: GOF IS INCREASINGLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE UNSTABLE CONDITIONS DEVELOPING IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND HAS SHOWN GREATER WILLINGNESS UNDER GISCARD THAN BEFORE TO INVOLVE ITSELF DIRECTLY. WE BELIEVE THIS TREND IS LIKELY TO INCREASE RATHER THAN DECREASE AND SEE SIGNS THAT GOF WANTS TO FILL WHATEVER POLITICAL VACUUMS IT CAN IN THIS AREA. MOREOVER, THIS FRENCH POLITICAL INTEREST IN THE MEDITERRANEAN HAS AN IMPORTANT MILITARY DIMENSION WHICH GISCARD UNDERLINED IN HIS RECENT INTERVIEWS IN LE FIGARO (REF B) AND ON TV
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(REF C).

FROM US VIEW THIS OFFERS BOTH OPPORTUNITIES AND PROBLEMS. EMBASSY BELIEVES IT IS QUITE IMPORTANT THEREFORE THAT COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN US ON MEDITERRANEAN ISSUES BE OPENED AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE, AND THEREFORE RECOMMENDS THAT THOUGHT BE GIVEN TO INCLUDING THIS SUBJECT ON AGENDA OF FORTHCOMING AND AS STANDARD ITEM IN FUTURE CAP MEETINGS.

B. INDIAN OCEAN SECURITY: GISCARD RECOGNIZES THAT FRENCH SECURITY, ESPECIALLY IN TERMS OF ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS, CANNOT REMAIN UNAFFECTED BY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN BASIN. AMONG OTHER THINGS, THIS REFLECTS THE FRENCH PERCEPTION THAT THE MIDDLE EAST -- TODAY'S MOST LIKELY FLASHPOINT OF ARMED CONFLICT TOUCHING FRENCH SECURITY -- HAS INDIAN OCEAN AS WELL AS MEDITERRANEAN FRONTIERS. FRANCE'S MILITARY ROLE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN HAS INCREASED IN RESPONSE TO PERCEPTION OF FRENCH GENERAL INTEREST IN THE AREA. COOPERATION BETWEEN THE U.S. AND FRENCH NAVIES DURING INDIAN OCEAN OPERATIONS HAS BEEN STEADILY INCREASING, A TREND WHICH WE HAVE ENCOURAGED AND WELCOME. THE UNCERTAIN FUTURE OF THE FRENCH PRESENCE IN DJIBOUTI, HOWEVER, CASTS A SHADOW OVER THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF FRANCE'S MILITARY ROLE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. WE BELIEVE THAT THE TIME IS RIPE FOR AN INFORMAL DISCUSSION BETWEEN FRENCH AND US POLICY PLANNERS CONCERNING OUR RESPECTIVE PERCEPTIONS OF THE INDIAN OCEAN SITUATION AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COOPERATIVE EFFORTS TO MEET THAT SITUATION.

4. IF DEPARTMENT AGREES THAT IT IS WORTH EXPLORING FRENCH REACTION TO THESE TWO ITEMS AS CANDIDATES FOR FEBRUARY MEETINGS AGENDA, WE WOULD LIKE TO PRESENT THEM TO DE MONTBRIAL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, AND CERTAINLY BEFORE HIS VIEWS BEGIN TO FIRM UP ON FRENCH PREFERENCES FOR AGENDA. PLEASE ADVISE.
RUSH

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